



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES

For Release
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The United States' largest fishery, that for pilchards, will again be under Federal control in the 1944-45 season according to an order issued by Coordinator of Fisheries Harold L. Ickes.

The pilchard fishery accounts for approximately 25 percent in weight of all U. S. and Alaska fish landings. Federal control was instituted in order to obtain maximum production to insure a smooth flow of fish into the various canning and processing plants, and to obtain a proper division between canned fish, meal, and oil.

Some pilchards are caught in waters off Washington and Oregon but the chief center of the industry is in California. The fish are familiar to most Americans as California sardines. The high food value, low cost, and transportability of canned pilchards have made them an important item for purchase both for the armed services and lend-lease requirements. This year 55 percent of the pack will be reserved for such use.

The Coordinated Pilchard Production Plan under which the industry will operate in the new season beginning August 1 does not differ materially from the plan which was in effect during the last season. This year, however, licenses will be required for purse seiners (the type of vessel normally used to fish for pilchards) fishing from Alaskan ports as well as those of Washington, Oregon, and California. These licenses are being required this year so that the Office of the Coordinator of Fisheries may transfer suitable vessels from the halibut fishery to that for pilchards. The halibut catch is under international regulation and the full amount can be obtained by the normal halibut fleet without additional fishing by purse seiners. Every year a number of purse seiners remain in North Pacific waters engaged in halibut fishing, going south to fish for pilchards only when the halibut season is ended. Since the halibut season was late in starting this year, it is feared that the purse seiners may be as many as ten weeks late in entering the pilchard fishery. This would cause a possible loss of 11,000 tons of pilchards.

Last season, vessel owners violating the order could only be suspended from fishing, a remedy which tended to defeat the purpose of the order. This year violators will be given a choice between keeping their vessels out of production or making certain payments to the United States Treasury.